



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
FRONT RANGE CENTER
3170 EAST MAIN STREET
CANON CITY, COLORADO 81212



FRONT RANGE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
HOLY CROSS ABBEY
January 14, 2004

MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

GROUP 1

Virginia Patton
Gene King
Robert Shoemaker
Chuck Rech

GROUP 2

Frances Mathews
Josh Osterhoudt
Larry Strohl
Kaaren Hardy

GROUP 3

Clark Becker
Michael Bush
Loren Whittemore
Joseph Duda
Keith McNew

RAC members not in attendance: Rick Thompson, and Leslie Wildesen.

GUESTS: Camille Mills and Doris Morgan, Senator Wayne Allard's Office; SeEtta Moss, President of the Arkansas Valley Audubon Society; Jan Swain, Back Country Horseman; and Eric Lane, State Weed Coordinator.

BLM/FS PERSONNEL:

Roy Masinton, Ken Smith, Pete Zwaneveld, Katie Franke, Mark Swinney, Tom Grette and Dave Walker.

There was adequate attendance for a quorum.

Chairman Loren Whittemore called the meeting to order at 9:15.a.m.

Joseph Duda was introduced as a new member to the Council.

COUNCIL BUSINESS:

Election of officers:

Nominations for Chair: Gene King nominated Loren Whittemore, Keith McNew Seconded. There were no other nominations. All voted in favor of Whittemore as chairman.

Nominations for vice chair: Larry Strohl nominated Francis Mathews. Clarke Becker seconded. There were no other nominations. All voted in favor of Francis Mathews for Vice-Chair.

Loren Whittemore read a letter from Kathleen Clarke the BLM Director. The letter commented on the great job done by the RAC and thanked the members for their continued support and help. Bob Shoemaker commented on an erosion problem that originates in Victor from an old mill

tailings disposal area mostly on private property. Storms carry the fine material downstream impacting private and public property as well as streams and eventually the Arkansas River. The silt is destroying the land and settling on the fields below. Shoemaker wants the Fremont County Commissioners to work with Teller County. Masinton commented that BLM, Teller County, other agencies and private land owners are working together to get money to stabilize the Millsap Gulch site. The Victor Mine is not responsible but is willing to help if funding is found. BLM is working with the Fremont County Commissioners to provide a letter of support from Fremont County to the Teller County Commissioners as they apply for Grant money.

Gene King asked about the Sage Grouse and the initiative that is in place. They are currently not listed as an Endangered Species but soon could be listed. BLM is not aware of public lands that would be affected, but are waiting to see how current management of the birds will respond.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

SeEtta Moss, talked about planning in terms of trails. She thinks in the future BLM should plan where we put trails. There is a bike race on private lands coming up and they are expecting 500 riders for the first bike race. This is in the Red Canyon Park area. This is not on BLM Lands but she feels future races will be, once trails are established. The impact on riparian lands will be great with heavy use. BLM should consider this in future planning of trails. She then passed around information on the race.

End of Public Comments

MANAGERS UPDATE:

Mark Swinney, San Luis Valley Resource Advisor:

BLM will soon be starting a travel management plan for the San Luis Valley. He would like the RAC to participate in identifying some of the issues. Over 500,000 acres will be involved in this large plan, and BLM needs input after the Notice of Intent is published in the Federal Register. The RAC discussed appointing a subgroup for help in this plan. Michael Bush, Francis Mathews, Gene King and Josh Osterhoudt volunteered to be on the subgroup and were appointed by the Chair. Loren asked if Michael Bush would be chairman of the Valley subcommittee. They will help: provide basic scoping, gather input and concerns from the public, categorize public comments and help determine the range of alternatives to present to the RAC. The San Luis Valley plan will be a major plan because of the size of the area. Mark Swinney will be the Project Manager for the Valley Plan and commented that the San Luis Valley will follow the method used in the Gold Belt Travel Management Plan for this effort.

Roy Masinton, Royal Gorge Field Manager:

San Luis Valley Transition: The transition of authority for the San Luis Valley is under way and will be occurring over the next four to six weeks. All BLM and the U.S. Forest Service offices in the San Luis Valley will have dual delegated authority. There will be no more Front Range Center and the office in Monte Vista will become the Rio Grande Forest Supervisors Office/BLM San Luis Valley Public Lands Center. Pete Clark will be the Forest Supervisor/Public Lands Center Manager and Jim Rhett will be the Deputy Forest Supervisor/Associate Public Lands Center Manager. The operation of the RAC will stay the same.

Chaffee County Right of Way Request: Masinton explained that Chaffee County has requested that BLM grant a 60 foot right-of- away (ROW) on a road crossing BLM public land into a subdivision. This is a flat area and 60 foot is a fairly wide request. BLM believes a 40 foot ROW is appropriate to handle the subdivision needs including drainage. The County Commissioners have agreed to let the County Planner work with BLM to accommodate drainage and any other needs within a 40 foot ROW.

Gold Belt Travel Management Plan: Dave Walker, Outdoor Recreation Planner, updated the Council on The Environmental Assessment which is available for public comment until February 20. Each member received a copy. After reviewing public comment and making appropriate changes, a final decision will be made and the document will go through a 60 day review by the Governors Office and a 30 day appeal period. If there are no appeals the plan will be implemented. A public open house will be held on February 3, at the VFW in Canon City to answer questions about the Environmental Assessment.

PRESENTATIONS:

Pete Zwaneveld, Planning and Environmental Coordinator:

The South Park Plan Amendment: In South Park there are about 70,000 acres with about 220 parcels involved. The original plan was to dispose of this over time, two thirds through exchange only and one third by other methods. However the Park County Commissioners don't want to lose public lands, so the plan is to now update and amend the original plan. Protecting the Mountain Plover, a BLM Sensitive species which lives in the area, is another reason to revisit the plan. South Park has the largest Mountain Plover population in Colorado. There are also a lot of fens in the area where the ground water has come to the surface. BLM will be working with multiple partners to consolidate ownership of lands in many areas and are waiting on a Notice of Intent to be published in the Federal Register to start the scoping. BLM is starting a working group that would be composed of 2 people from BLM, 3 from the RAC, and someone from Park County, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado State Land Board, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and also people representing private landowners, grazing, environmental, and water interests. After discussion, RAC members Larry Strohl, Kaaren Hardy and Chuck Rech were appointed to the subcommittee. This will be a cooperative effort.

Masinton also mentioned that BLM may be doing a plan amendment to address the potential R&PP non-revocable lease of parcels of public land to Fremont County for shooting ranges. This would replace shooting in certain existing areas on public lands. These discussions are in the very initial stages and BLM will be working with the County Commissioners on this issue.

Roy Masinton, Royal Gorge Field Manger

Expected Plan And Work Items For FY 04 in the Royal Gorge Field Office:

-The Gold Belt Travel Management Plan is expected to be completed in 2004.

-The Arkansas River Travel Management Plan was started in FY03 and inventory work is nearly completed. The Environmental Assessment will be prepared in mid 2004 with a decision in early 2005.

-The Range Program expects to renew 30+ grazing permits, health assessments will be completed on a watershed basis.

-Minerals and Oil and Gas work will continue as normal with no increase in applications expected. A company is looking at a possible coal mine which may be addressed in 2004.

-Processing and issuing right-of-ways will continue. Subdivision issues on public lands, such as requests for public lands for fire houses and other support facilities, will probably increase. Masinton said that these support facilities should be on private land and should have been included in the planning and development of the subdivision.

-There are some land exchanges that are expected to be completed this year.

Paula Sheagley from the Holy Cross Abby gave a history of the facility and plans for the future.

Lunch

Eric Lane, State Weed Coordinator:

Colorado's Strategic Plan to Stop the Spread of Noxious Weeds: The State Plan was published in December 2001 by the Governor of Colorado and 43 public and private organizations. Existing efforts on weed control are diverse with little coordination on private, state and federal lands. There are some different programs in multiple areas with different visions. The State has tried to create one program with a vision, mission and common goals. There are two main issues in weed control: agriculture and healthy lands. The weeds will spread if we do not coordinate and work together to stop the spread of the species. To accomplish this: 1) the entrance of weeds into Colorado needs to be curbed, 2) they need to be treated immediately when they do enter the state, 3) address the species that are already here by locating and coming up with a coordinated approach, 4) some lands have high agricultural and environmental value, and need to be treated to maintain that value.

There is a need to define how to "manage" a species. To help with this and the goals of weed control, a 15 member committee will be established in Colorado. They are to designate and classify all weeds in the state and possible threats of new weeds. Then determine how to treat and where to draw lines of containment where needed. Step one was to establish the committee, now they are working to reestablish a State Weed List. Mr. Lane can be contacted with questions or concerns Eric Lane 303-239-4182 eric.lane@ag.state.co.us e-mail www.ag.state.co.us/dpi/weeds/weed.html website.

Masinton is asking the RAC to consider working in partnership, possibly with the other Colorado RACs on weed management and to support the State Plan. The Northwest RAC has discussed this also. This may be a topic for the March RAC meeting.

Tom Grette: Royal Gorge Range Management Specialist:

BLM, Royal Gorge Field Office Noxious Weed Program: The noxious weed mapping process, for the Royal Gorge Field Office, is complete. He showed maps of local weed areas and species. BLM controls about 100 areas per year, which includes a lot of re-treatment. Almost all work was done in salt cedar last year. Grette will be doing some monitoring this year to determine the effectiveness of the weed control.

Keith McNew motioned to adjourn.

Virginia Patton seconded.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next Front Range RAC meeting will be held in the Canon City on March 18, 2004.

Roy L. Masinton
Front Range Center Manager
Bureau of Land Management

Loren R. Whittemore
Chairman
Front Range Resource Advisory Council